

KEY VOTE **ALERT!**



Congressional & Public Affairs
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
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TO THE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

On behalf of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the world's largest business federation representing more than three million businesses and organizations of every size, sector, and region, I write to express our strong support for the passage of H.R. 5684, the "United States-Oman Free Trade Implementation Act."

The U.S.-Oman Free Trade Implementation Act will provide U.S. companies of all sectors increased access to a rapidly growing market in one of the most strategically important regions of the world. With bilateral trade between the U.S. and Oman surpassing \$1.1 billion in 2005, the agreement is of particular interest to U.S. exporters of telecommunications, oil and gas, medical, and electrical and manufacturing equipment. Oman has a weighted average tariff of 14%, presenting U.S. exporters with relatively high barriers to market access; the FTA will eliminate all tariffs on industrial and consumer products immediately upon entry into force.

Additionally, passage of this agreement is an important component of U.S. efforts to expand trade ties with countries in the Middle East, and it furthers the goal of creating a Middle East Free Trade Area (MEFTA) by 2013. Passage of the agreement with Oman would be the fifth such agreement with a country in the Middle East and a step forward in deepening the U.S. economic relationship with the region. MEFTA will create a competitive advantage for U.S. companies in the Middle East against trade competitors in Europe and Asia that are also aggressively negotiating trade agreements that promote non-U.S. standards.

Furthermore, approving this trade agreement is important if the U.S. is to advance a broader trade agenda, which includes concluding high standard, high value negotiations such as the World Trade Organization Doha Round, and Free Trade Agreement discussions with Korea and Malaysia. Our trading partners around the world are looking toward this agreement in order to gauge U.S. commitment and seriousness to free and fair trade.

In short, the U.S.-Oman Free Trade Implementation Act furthers America's regional efforts to promote political, labor and economic reforms, bolsters anti-terrorism efforts, and provides substantial economic opportunities for American businesses large and small. Therefore, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce strongly encourages your support for passage of H.R.5684. **For these reasons, the Chamber will consider using votes on, or in relation to, this issue in our annual How They Voted scorecard.**

Sincerely,

R. Bruce Josten